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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7532
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1591
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4928
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INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7268

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/Spain, OIC, Israeli Nukes, Palestinian Territories,
Lebanon, Iraq, Iran (2/23-25)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Feb. 25 reported that on Feb. 22 in Madrid King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain inaugurated Arab House and the Spanish Political Conference with the participation of Foreign Minister Walid Mouallem and the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Tunisia, Yemen, Iraq and Jordan. King Carlos, who heads the Council of Secretaries of Arab House, hoped the conference would be the starting point for an Arab-Spanish ministerial forum and a framework for political interaction for reaching joint positions in the future. Al-Mouallem delivered a speech at the conference in which he reiterated the importance of reviving the Arab-Europe dialogue, touching upon the important role that Spain is playing as "a bridge between Arabs and Europeans in understanding the issues of the region...." He called for reviving the Middle East peace process with the aim of reaching a just and comprehensive settlement that ends the Israeli occupation of the occupied Arab territories in the Golan and Palestine.

Papers also reported the OIC Ministerial meeting that concluded on Feb. 22 in Jeddah with the participation of Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal al-Meqdad. The conference focused on Israeli assaults against the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The conferees supported the Mecca Accord between Fatah and Hamas and welcomed efforts to form a Palestinian national unity government. The meeting mandated the OIC Group in New York to follow up on its request to the UN Security Council to take the necessary measures to end the serious violations against the al-Aqsa Mosque. It requested the OIC Group at UNESCO to continue to urge this organization to fulfill its responsibilities and take the necessary measures to preserve the human and civilization heritage of Jerusalem, including the formation of a committee to investigate the Israeli assaults against the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Papers also reported that the Arab Ambassadors Council in Vienna has stressed, in a message sent to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, Mohammed Baradei on Feb. 23, that by possessing military nuclear capabilities, Israel is violating the will of the international community. The message, which was sent by the Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps, Omani Ambassador in Vienna, Salem Ben Mohammed, underlined the importance of the Syrian Initiative in 2003, which was proposed on behalf of the Arab Group at the UN Security Council, that called for ridding

the Middle East of WMD, confirming the Arab countries' right to take all measures necessary to deal with the threat represented by the Israeli nuclear arsenal.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Foreign Minister Mouallem calls for reviving Arab- European dialogue and the Middle East Peace Process" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/23)

"Deputy Foreign Minister Miqdad addresses the OIC Ministerial meeting in Jedda: The weakness of the Arab nation encourages Israeli assaults against the al-Aqsa mosque" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/23)

"Former US Ambassador to the UN Richard Holbrooke and US Democratic Senator Christopher Carney call on US President Bush to hold dialogue with Syria" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/25)

"The Organization of Islamic Conference calls for boycotting relations with Israel" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/25)

"British 'Daily Telegraph': Israel negotiates with Washington to hit Iranian positions" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/25)

"The Lebanese opposition: The current government works according to the directives of US Ambassador in Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/25)

"Solana: We will not leave Palestinians without help. Mishaal in Moscow tomorrow: European steps to break siege on Palestinians have started; Arabs are capable of breaking the siege" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/24)

"A UN report depicts Israeli occupation as apartheid" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/24)

"The UN Human Rights Council: Israel is practicing racist discrimination and terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/23)

"Arab Ambassadors in Vienna urge Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency el-Baradei to address the Israeli nuclear threat" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/24)

"The Lebanese national opposition heads towards a decisive week. The agenda of the February 14 team is not Lebanese. The explosives that were discovered in Al-Ashrafia are Israeli-made" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/24)

"Former Lebanese Prime Minister al-Huss: Lebanese accord is achievable without superpowers' intervention" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/23)

"Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan: The International Court must unveil the truth, not settle scores" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/25)

"US helicopters are successively falling in Iraq. British papers: Blair's decision on reducing forces in Iraq is a classic scenario for a defeated leader" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 2/23)

"Iran launches a satellite and warns against any aggression. US Vice President Cheney: All options are on the table with regard to Iran" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 2/25)

"Iran persists in its right to a peaceful nuclear program. US political and military mobilization is met by Russian-Chinese opposition and German patience" (Government-owned Tishreen, 2/24)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Before the Damage Has Been Done"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (2/24): "When Israel conducts large-scale military maneuvers, using all types of weapons, on occupied Syrian territory -- as recognized by the whole world - it acts as if it is exercising a natural right! Is it not the spoiled child of the near and far West and the illegitimate baby of the colonialist West's conspiracy against Arabs for more than a century?"

"If a news report about Syria's intention to conclude a normal and purely defensive arms deal is leaked, the US Administration raises a hue and cry and works without limit to hinder the deal because any weapons for Syria threaten the security of Israel and the United States itself, and perhaps the security of the galaxy!"

"But when the United States shows all generosity toward Israel and opens the doors of its storehouses wide for Tel Aviv to scoop up whatever defensive and assault weapons it wants, conventional or not, Syria, the Arabs, and the peoples of the region from Central Asia to central Africa should not worry...!"

"Because there is a mythical project in the minds of Israel, the Zionist Conference Organization, and the Zionized Americans who embrace so-called 'Zionist Christianity,' the threat is not imaginary; it has not been invented by any Arab, Muslim, or Christian...."

"We do not think people could disagree that what is happening in Iraq is aimed at serving Israel, Zionists, and neoconservatives in the United States, Britain, and many other countries in the civilized West!"

"For more than a quarter of a century, Israel believed that a strong Arab Iraq posed a threat to it and that Syria was the second threat...."

"The Zionist Israeli strategy that the Zionized forces are implementing does not stop at the border of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. It includes the entire Arab world and beyond, up to Iran, Turkey, and Central Asia...."

"The Quartet and a Tripartite Meeting"

Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawrah, wrote (2/23): "The result of the Quartet meeting in Berlin was very similar to the result of the tripartite meeting among US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, which was even more of a failure...."

"The quartet has been unable so far to play a role independent of American influence, which always drags it toward Israel...."

"Israel is benefiting from nearly full American cover and it has nothing to offer to Palestinians, irrespective of who represents them.... Israel seeks to foil the Mecca Accord between Fatah and HAMAS and bring Palestinians back to internecine clashes. This being the case, Palestinians need to demonstrate maximum national unity and adhere fully to the Mecca Accord...."

"Britain Shocks Bush"

Muhammad Khayr al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (2/23): "British Prime Minister Tony Blair surprised the US Administration with his decision to withdraw British forces from Iraq by the end of 2008 and to set a timetable for the implementation of this decision, a timetable that begins with the speedy return of 1,600 soldiers to their country...."

"How will Bush react to the British decision? If he says the decision is correct, he will be asked to do the same, and if he says that this is a betrayal of the biggest ally, he will be asked: why don't you withdraw the troops now that they are left alone in the quagmire of death and blood?

"The British decision closed the door to Bush's maneuvers to stay in Iraq and blocked the false policies through which he has justified the worst decision by an American president, namely, the decision to invade Iraq.

"If Bush still has an option to save face after the withdrawal of his big allies -- Spain, Italy, and Britain -- from Iraq, then it is the option of following in their footsteps and making a courageous decision to pull out of Iraq to save the American troops and the Iraqi people from the bloodbath and allow Iraq to regain its freedom, independence, and unity, which the occupation is trying to tear apart in its effort to control the country, which rejects the invasion and its colonial plans.

Corbin